Attacks on Hindus During Durga Puja in Bangladesh

515. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:
SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS l e pleased to state:

(a) whether Hindu in Bangladesh have lost fre~dom of human rights and practise their own religion as is evident from the 'Statesman' news dated 16th October, 2001 regarding Durga Puja Pandals and images of Hindu Gods and Goddesses damaged by attackers.

(b) whether the attack on the minorities in Bangladesh continues unabated; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to persuade Bangladesh Government to take appropriate steps to stop violence against minorities?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Details of attack on minorities in Bangladesh and steps taken by Government to persuade Bangladesh Government to take appropriate steps

The Government is seriously concerned at the reports of violence, particularly against minorities, in Bangladesh following the general elections in that country on October 1, 2001. A number of incidents have been reported of attacks on the life and property of the minorities, molestation of the women members of their families as also of damage and destruction of puja pandals, temples. According to Bangladesh media, the scale and intensity of the violence were unprecedented. These incidents have created an atmosphere of insecurity and many Bangladeshis are reported to have crossed over to India; given the long and porous border, the exact number is difficult to ascertain. The Government of India would naturally treat all those who have crossed over to India in these circumstances with compassion and understanding.

After the new Government assumed power in Bangladesh on October 10, 2001, the Government of India's serious concern was conveyed at different levels. The High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh raised the issue with the Bangladesh Minister of State for Religious Affairs on October 16, 2001. Shri Brajesh Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, who visited Dhaka as his Special Envoy on October 26-27, 2001, also discussed the matter with the Bangladesh Government.

The Government of Bangladesh have reiterated their commitment to the safety and security of all communities and have stated categorically that firm action would be taken to protect the minorities and to punish the perpetrators of violence against them. The Government of Bangladesh allocated Taka 40 lakhs for Durga Puja celebrations and Ministers were directed to visit their constituencies to restore confidence amongst the minorities. Recently, the Government of Bangladesh have set up a special committee headed by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to enquire into these attacks.

Harrasment of Minorities in Bangladesh

516. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of harassment of the minorities in Bangladesh;

(b) the number of people who have migrated / shifted to India as a result of such harassment;

(c) whether Government would allow such people to remain in India and help their settlement here;

(d) whether the Bangladesh Government have assured safety of minorities in Bangladesh; and

(e) if so, how far they have implemented such assurance?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (e) A Statement is placed on the Table of the House. [*Refer to the Statement appended to the answer to Unstarred Question No. 515.]*

Indian killed in WTC Attack

517. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 5000 Indians were working at the World Trade Centre USA which was attaked by the terrorist;

(b) if so, the number of Indians who have been killed in the attacks in US;

(c) whether the US Government have also supplied the list of the Indians killed;

(d) whether Indian had also protested to the US Government on attacks on Sikh community in US; and